



Editor's Page

I can't believe I fell for it. You know, the purchase of a bird dog. I had already failed in the training of one gun dog. The Golden Retriever who showed such promise as a pup has turned into an unabashed coward. I hesitate to admit that he even has an uncontrollable fear of ducks—but only when they turn on him.

Still, after several years, the memory of one training failure dimmed and instead took on the aura of simply bad breeding. The Golden was too sensitive, I decided. I'll try a bird dog next. Besides, upland hunting is much more pleasant and civilized than duck hunting. You can enjoy your coffee in the morning and catch up on your sleep while practicing this sport. I decided on a bird dog; a French Brittany, to be exact.

Now, many of you dog lovers may never have heard of a "French" Brittany; in fact, the name itself sounds rather redundant, since the breed originated in France. However, because of many things, including the American love to make something undeniably their own, the French Brittany turned into the American Brittany, by changing the color of its eyes, nose, and its coat.

Of course, I had to have the original black nose, black-eyed beast, and I'm still trying to figure out how to blame that initial decision for all my training problems of late. Of course, any pointer or setter man could make it quite simple for me. They would insist that I had picked the wrong breed. Sadly, that is entirely too easy. I'm afraid the blame for all the training blunders lies with me.

I never realized how hard it was to train a gun dog until the day my Brittany arrived in a dog crate from Missouri. I knew I was in trouble when he barely passed obedience school, while his Golden Retriever buddy sailed passed it years earlier simply, I am



convinced, to please me.

Field work was the next step in training my new bird dog, and happy in my innocence, I ruined Yeager before the first season had ended. Oh. I had read all the books on "sure-fire methods to train your pointing dog," and I'd listened to every piece of advice from every self-made dog trainer who stopped by my office or whom I accosted in the field. Yes, I admit it. My pup's downfall is my own. Despite all the good will and natural ability of my finely bred pup, I knew I had really messed up when a professional trainer suggested of late that perhaps Yeager would make a fine turkey dog. I was shattered.

Picking up the pieces of what's left after two years' worth of mistakes which my evil-minded Brittany has relished, I've become wiser in defeat. Frankly, I had no idea that gun dog training could be so much work. And, that it requires so much thinking. It's hard enough to think how best to conduct oneself in human circles, but to analyze one's actions in a dog's world is simply too much to ask of most of us weak, self-centered humans.

That is why I've come to admire, nay, idolize, professional dog trainers. And, I mean the kind of trainers that the mentor of all pointing dog trainers in this country, Delmar Smith, says he can count on his two hands. These are the men and women who are quick to smile and slow to make judgments, be it on dogs or men. And, I haven't met one yet who raises his voice much above a whisper except when he's handling a dog in a field trail (and that's probably only out of consideration for the gallery who loves the noise of the handlers calling their dogs with words from the belly). Come to think of it, most of these trainers don't speak unless they're spoken to, and most of 'em take their time finding the right words to answer you. I've never seen a temper flare in these trainers, and I've never seen teeth gritted in frustration or a frown cross their faces. Instead, I've seen thoughtfulness displayed when the rest of us mortals would be screaming at our dogs and yanking them halfway across a bird field.

Even when their dogs do goof, like when they bump a bird or gulp down a retrieve on the run, I've never seen any one of them make much of it. In fact, you hardly even know it's happened, 'cause the dog's simply picked up and put back in the kennel. I've never heard a trainer blame a dog for anything.

Yeah, it's the middle of hunting season, and I don't have a broke dog. But I'm learning. And I'm out there in the field, thinking about my training, and trying real hard not to lose my temper, especially when somebody's around. That's hunting, though. It's not just learning how to shoot and stalk game. It's learning hard stuff, like being responsible for your actions, whether it be to a dog or a human being.

For the hunter, there's always one more lesson to be learned. And one more hunting season.



photo by Lynda Richardson

The Still Hunt—An American Tradition. by Bob Gooch Still-hunting deer often takes a backseat to other more popular forms of deer hunting. Still, it is an effective method, and an American original.

Tips, Tactics, and Tackle for Stripers by Bruce Ingram This is the season to fish for stripers in Virginia's lakes. Here's how.

A Hunter's Ducks by Jerry Via When you're in the field, it's often hard to identify your ducks. Here's how to identify five of the more common ones you'll probably come across this season.



photo by Charles Schwartz

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Male mallard in flight; photo by Steve Maslowski.

Ducks, Decoys, and Big Water

by Steve Ausband There's still some real duck hunting left in the state, the kind that tests the body and soul; you just have to go to the big water to find it. And, once you're there, you need to know how to hunt it.

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photo by Rob Simpson

Making Room For Wildlife—On a 22 Small Scale by Randall Shank So, you've moved out into the country to be

landlord over your very own five acres. Here's how to make room for your wildlife tenants that also call it home.

26 Sticking Tight by Nancy Hugo Hitchhikers are known for their sticking ability—to just about anything that moves. But did you ever wonder where they came from?

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

he wind that has been blowing for two days now has shifted, coming sharply out of the North, and there is a chill in the air. At night the ground is frozen hard. I had almost forgotten the sombre beauty of monotones: bare trees, stubble fields, leaves in sodden clumps underfoot. The wind streaks the water, lines and flecks of white on black under a sky like gray wool, a Verichrome-pan picture of winter, of coldness, of the end of the year. There are ducks in the air.

For a dedicated waterfowler, there is a special beauty in the first truly cold days of winter, especially if he or she likes to hunt big water. For them, early fall hunts for woodies in beaver ponds and the relatively mild pursuit of mallards in inland reservoirs or along river bottoms all seem like mere preliminaries for the real hunting season. I, personally, like the slap of waves against the sides of a boat taking me to an offshore blind in the cold predawn darkness. I like the low, irregular lines of scaup or ringbills or redheads over the slate-gray chop of the bay, their short wings driving them at incredible speeds into the wind. I like the great rafts of birds sitting on the water in the distance, and the singles that fly by the decoys: just buffleheads sometimes, or the funny little ruddy ducks that are likely to swim right in among your blocks, tails fanned like those of miniature turkeys. Just after dawn there will be great V's of swans and Canada geese getting off the water and heading for distant grain fields. The swans have a high, hooting call that carries for miles; I hear them before I see the enormous white bodies. The Canadas have a two-note call, the sound breaking from low to high, hanging in the cold air above the whistle of the wind, as pure as the tones of stroked crystal. And most of all I like the no-nonsense drive of a line of scaup that has seen the decoy spread and has all at once made up its collective mind to buzz right over the top-six feet off the water, black and white elongated wedges hurtling left to right, faster than I can believe even though I've seen it a thousand times, close enough to see the yellow eyes and hear the rush of wings even over the wind. This is Ducks, Decoys,

the season I have waited for.

With its great tidal rivers leading into Chesapeake Bay, the Bay itself, and the miles of relatively shallow, open water of Back Bay and along the Atlantic side of the Eastern Shore, Virginia offers an enormous number of big-water duck hunting possibilities. Whether the hunter uses an elevated platform on a shoal that may

extend hundreds of yards from shore, a floating blind (often just a good, stable boat with a makeshift framing to hold brush for camouflage), or a makeshift blind along a windswept shoreline, there are certain constants about hunting the big water.

Perhaps the most important difference between offshore duck hunting and inland hunting on reservoirs or

and Big Water

There's still some real duck hunting left in the state, the kind that tests the body and soul; you just have to go to the big water to find it. And, once you're there, you need to know how to hunt it.

by Steve Ausband



use and placement of decoys. Numbers hunting along a shoreline, I ordinarily use from two to three dozen decoys. handling that many blocks can be divers—redheads, cans, scaup, ring-

beaver ponds is the difference in the something of a chore, even if some are arranged on the same anchor line, the count. On an inland reservoir, when results often make the extra minutes of trouble worthwile.

For most of my big-water hunting, I On an offshore hunt, three dozen is use decoy rigs made up almost entirely about the minimum, and I much prefer of diving duck replicas. Scaup are usufive dozen. I have used as many as a ally the easiest to find, though I have hundred decoys on occasion. While some canvasback decoys as well. All

bills, and the like—have splotches of white on dark bodies, and they all seem to decoy readily to color patterns of other divers. They seem to be a bit less discriminating about realistic detail than puddle ducks, sometimes appearing willing to buzz right over anything that looks vaguely like a line of blackand-white bodies. The deadliest decoys I ever owned were so cheaply made they almost disintegrated after one season of hard use. They were oversized, chunky, rather garish-looking scaup imitations made of Styrofoam with lead keels. Sitting on a calm body of water they would have been laughable. Put those same pitiful-looking hunks out on a choppy bay, however, and they would dance and bob and flash their white patches against the dark water. I owned two dozen of the cheapies, and I mixed them in with three dozen more realistic looking decoys. Diving ducks poured into that mixture on what looked like a series of starting runs by miniature jets. I would see a cloud of specks low on the water, a wavering line over the tops of the waves. Then the line would reform and shift and the specks would get larger and larger until they swung over the set of rag-tag decoys and roared by the blind. It reminded me of a good dove shoot, except everything was a lot colder and wetter.

Since one is likely to get a shot at a Canada goose in most places in Virginia where ducks are hunted over big water, I always carry some goose decoys. When I am after geese exclusively, I am in a field, surrounded by dozens of silhouette and shell decoys. I always have a half-dozen to a dozen goose decoys on an offshore duck hunt, though, partly because the presence of the geese might serve as confidence builders for the ducks, and partly because there is always a chance that a lonely goosed will drop in for a visit. Geese stick together, and I try to separate the goose and duck decoys.

There are times when almost any arrangement of decoys will work in open water. Many successful hunters I know simply string out the decoys in parallel lines, several decoys wide, reaching from about 40 yards windward of the blind to the blind's sides.

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For consistently convincing wild birds on open water that a decent feeding or resting area is near at hand, however, I have never found anything that beats the "I" or "fishhook" rig.

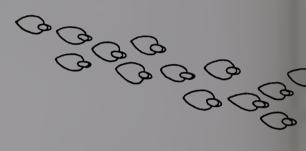
The diagram shows a fairly typical arrangement, with four dozen duck decoys and eight goose decoys. It is especially effective from a floating blind anchored in shallow water on a shoal, when the blind and the decoys can be arranged so as to take best advantage of the wind. The whole thing can be set up surprisingly quickly by a couple of hunters, and the arrangement has three distinct advantages over a more haphazard string-out of the blocks or a bunched-up, funnelling set such as one might use for puddlers. In the first place, it is so long that it calls attention to itself, creating the illusion that there are many more ducks on the water than four dozen. In the second place, it encourages the ducks to fly close along the edge of the hook's shank on a path that will bring them within range of the blind. Finally, it encourages the ducks to make up their minds ("Will I land, fly over, or swerve off?"—assuming birds articulate such questions) at the critical moment when they are directly in front of the blind and well within range. Here's how it works.

All diving ducks seem to like to follow lines. I have seen them flying over weed lines, the edges of shoals visible from the air, and ice lines. They even tend to stick to a given distance (usually a fairly long distance) from a line of trees along shore. When they see

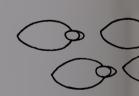
Goose decoys, if they are used, are set abruptly, forming a pocket behind a slightly to the side, away from the lines clump of resting birds, as is the case in of ducks. Other hunters use a sort of the "j" rig, the ducks must either land, funnelling arrangement of blocks, the overfly, or swerve out beyond the tip idea being to encourage birds to land of the "I"-but they will do so only in the open water between the edges of after they have flown directly in front the funnel. It's a good arrangement for of the bend of the "I." Since the bend puddle ducks, but divers often dive is positioned close to the blind, the along the outer edges of the funnel and ducks are in range. They may be going ignore the carefully made landing area. 70 miles an hour right over the top of

fact that, in open water, I can watch a small cloud of diving ducks getting ready to make that particular, heartstopping maneuver while they're still a half-mile away is reason enough to keep me cold and wet most of the winter.

Another difference between bigwater shooting and hunting inland is the angle at which shots will be



The Fishhook Rig— The decoy rig for big water



the line; or they may be swerving away, their near-side wings up, exposing their light-colored breasts; or (best of all), they may have their flaps down. feet dragging, heading for the water. The shot may be tough or relatively easy, depending on which decision the ducks have made, but the birds will be in range. I miss a lot of ducks even other birds sitting on the water, they under these circumstances, but all the overfly along the edges of the resting work in cold weather is suddenly ducks. If they are tempted to land, or worthwhile when I even see the birds at least to come close enough to con- make their wide loop into the wind, sider making a landing, they will almost straighten up, and come screaming always fly into the wind along the edge along that line of decoys just exactly of the line. If the line swerves out the way I had hoped they would. The

attempted. Hunting inland, I'm usually shooting up. Offshore, I am very frequently shooting down, especially if I am hunting from an elevated box blind. Diving ducks usually fly fairly low on the water, unlike mallards, blacks, woodies, and other puddlers, which like altitude. When divers make their final approach, they start dropping from 50 to 60 feet off the water to about six or eight feet while they're still 100 yards or more away, and the shooting takes place right over the blocks. As a matter of fact, if the birds attempt a landing, the shooting sometimes takes place right in the blocks.

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end, they sat too low in the water.

This kind of thing makes decoy sellers shine as if they were on a Florida beach very happy. Even among careful, expe- or, if they fly at all, fly somewhere rienced hunters, people who are used other than near your decoys. Quite to shooting at low-approaching divers, often, on the duckiest, nastiest, coldest putting a few stray pellets into the days, I use a 16-foot boat, and I have decoys is not unheard of. I must con- had some decidedly nervous moments fess that I have some decoys that in it. It may sound odd to say that duck retired last year because, by season's hunting can be dangerous, but overturning a small boat in cold, rough seas A final difference in the hunter's offers the potential for disaster. Ice

Blind

ing is the realization that it can offer terribly unforgiving of mistakes and inland hunts these days is in a 12-foot him one extremely cold and windy day aluminum boat with an ancient 7.5 Evinrude attached to the stern. It's a good rig, just about right for slipping through shallow spots, and very easy to hide. I've used it on some trips in bigger water, too, but only when conditions were just right. If conditions ducks, which tend to bask in the sun- blind, or who don't know where to

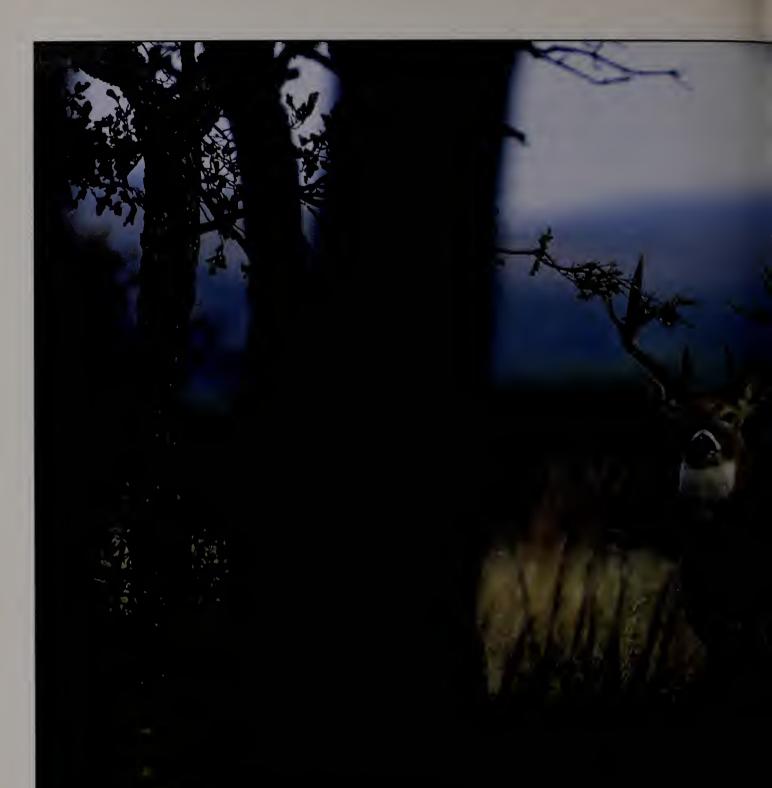
preparation for big-water duck hunt- water in a place like Chesapeake Bay is more excitement than people in small careless boat handling. I once knew a boats bargained for. Much of my tra- man who used a creaky, wooden boat veling to and from duck blinds on for all his hunting. It came apart under on Currituck Sound, and he never came home. Things like that don't happen often, but the potential is always there on big water. It's a place to be even more careful than usual while hunting.

For hunters who don't want to go to are just right for a 12-foot boat, they the trouble and expense of building are probably not very good for diving and licensing a permanent or floating

find good open-water shooting, the best bet is a commercial guide service. Going with someone who knows the area and has all the equipment has lots of advantages over freelance hunting. and the rates are usually quite reasonable. When one considers the cost of boat maintenance, decoys, blinds, gasoline and oil, and the guide's time and expertise, commercial lodges and guide services become more and more appeal-

Each hunter has his own favorite sport, and that's as it should be. I have friends who ignore everything, including work and family, during turkey season. There are others who live to deer hunt, and, among my duckhunting associates, there are a couple of guys who think slipping into a beaver swamp before sunrise and waiting for the first flight of woodies among the trees is just about the finest joy the outdoors has to offer. I like all these things too, but most of all I like the big water. I like being in a camp at night when the wind is blowing over the marsh, and sometimes during the pauses of the wind I can hear geese moving out over the water. In the morning, long before first light, I will go to the boat, maybe crunching a little ice in shallow water with my waders, and untie the lines with fingers that are already stiff with cold. Later, when the sun comes up blood red over the water, I will be looking out over my line of decoys and trying to decide if I am satisified with the arrangement. The colors of the water and the marsh grass on shore will be almost startlingly bright when the sun first hits them, and then the birds will start to move: a few singles at first, then the big flocks of geese and swans, and then the clouds of ducks, the cans and scaup coming off the bay. If I am lucky, I will watch one of these clouds swirl and reform, swinging into the wind and heading low over the water toward my blind. I crouch, staring through the cover of reeds and brush, no longer cold. "This is it," I think. "This is hunting season." □

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The Still Hunt— An American Tradition

Still-hunting deer often takes a backseat to other more popular forms of deer hunting. Still, it is an effective method, and an American original.

by Bob Gooch

atient hunters visiting Ash Lawn, the early 19th century Albemarle County home of James Monroe, with their spouses, will be struck by the hunting murals on the drawing room walls. In one, a red deer is scampering away before a pack of hounds, while in another there's an eager pack giving chase to a wild boar. Our fifth President obviously had a deep interest in hunting.

But an American hunting scene? Hardly. There are no red deer in America. It's an atypical hunting scene for the Old Dominion, but it reveals some of our rich hunting heritage.

Despite Mr. Monroe's famous Monroe Doctrine, which declared our independence of European interference, the Old World influence was still strong in America then, hunting included. While there were no red deer for early Virginia hunters, there were plenty of whitetails. And hunting them with hounds was becoming increasingly popular. It's an Old World custom that remains popular—not only in Virginia, but south along the Atlantic Coast.

Yet, despite its rich heritage, the modern deer hound is a controversial critter. And, it will become increasingly so as Virginia's population continues to grow. Because, although its rich traditions will keep it strong for years, it's the kind of hunting that an expanding urban population is bound to curb. There's no way you can confine a deer chase to a 100-acre farm.

So, how do you hunt those deer on that 100-acre farm without dogs? Just look west of the Blue Ridge Mountains where hunters bag thousands of white-tails every season, where the hunting fever runs high, and where most hunters have never given a thought to hunting with hounds. Study their highly

Still-hunting is a North American Indian tradition. And it's still a challenging way to hunt whitetails today; photo by Vinyard Brothers. successful methods.

Let's run quickly through several

possibilities.

Even on small plots of land, man drives can be carried out successfully in a 10-acre patch of hardwoods. Successful hunters study the habits of the deer in those tiny coverts, establish their escape routes, and pick out likely stands. Even a pair of hunters can work a man drive. One takes a stand along a likely escape route and the other attempts to flush the deer toward his waiting partner.

Other hunters scout their hunting territory thoroughly, attempt to establish the animal's feeding pattern, and wait along well-used trails between

bedding and feeding areas.

Still other hunters build tree stands in good deer country, stands that give them a commanding view of a wide area, and simply wait. "I get some good shooting near noon," one Botetourt County hunter who practices this method told me. "Hunters begin to leave the woods about that time and they often spook deer and move them within the range of my rifle. I sometimes take deer at 300 yards or more." That successful hunter has a sturdy tree stand in fine deer country. His stand even has a roof and walls that allow him to remain comfortable and alert in inclement weather.

Deer seldom look up, and a good tree stand gives the hunter a tremendous advantage in that he can see the deer before his quarry sees him. That's a basic tenet in hunting deer without hounds. Be ready to take your deer before it becomes alarmed. A real challenge, but one thousands of successful

hunters meet every season.

Floating an inland river will also produce good shots at whitetails as they travel along the riverbanks, but there are a number of legal obstacles to this method in the Old Dominion. Even though this is a popular hunting method in other states, it is not practical in the Old Dominion.

And then there is still-hunting, challenging, exciting, and productive. A fun way to bag your buck or doe.

Still-hunting and stand-hunting are not the same, incidentally, even though

stand-hunter doesn't move, but the still-hunter does constantly—even though it's slowly. The hunter on a tree stand, for example, is a standhunter, not a still-hunter. Still-hunting means moving slowly and cautiously through likely whitetail country. Let's take it a step at a time.

Begin with the hunter's clothing. The proper clothing is vital to consistent still-hunting success. Too many hunters wear brush clothing—jackets and trousers—into the deer woods. hard-finished cloth that is fine for wadcolor. And wool is a fine choice for the modern hunter, but today's hunting color is blaze orange, and it's required by law in Virginia. Wool hunting clothing, however, is not as popular today. having been replaced by down for warmth. Go with your own choice. just make sure your outer clothing has a soft finish that doesn't create unnatural noises when brushed against vegetation. Cotton, such as well-worn denim, is another good choice. Worn over down underwear, it will provide sufficient warmth for most Virginia



ing through briars and brush for grouse, quail, and rabbits, but too noisy for still-hunting for deer. Wade through low vegetation with brush trousers and you'll spook every deer within a half mile.

The proper still-hunting clothing is soft finished. The old-time deer hunter wore wool, wool trousers, a wool jacket, and even a wool cap or hat. All they are often considered as such. The red then, the traditional deer hunting

For the deer hunter, the ideal choice in a firearm is the rifle, something in the .270 or .30/06 caliber range. Some hunters like the little .243. In many eastern counties, however, local ordinances ban the rifle. That makes still-hunting tough. The hunter needs an accurate firearm that will drop his deer out there at 100 yards. That's stretching a shot too far for buckshot.

Shotgun slugs will do it, but some ordinances also ban slugs along with

Properly clothed and armed, the still-hunter is ready for the challenge. Still-hunting is often confused with stalking, but the stalker has his game sighted. He is trying to get within shooting range without spooking the critter. The still-hunter, on the other hand, is looking for game. He, too, may become a stalker once he locates his

The successful still-hunter is ever

Still-hunting requires long periods of watchful waiting, and then, slow, silent movement through the woods: photo by Lloyd B. Hill.

aware of the whitetail's excellent senses of hearing and smell—particularly smell. He worries less about its somewhat mediocre vision. To combat these lines of defense he is also ever aware of carry his odor to the deer, and he'll if necessary. Otherwise he'll move

never get close.

Commercial masking scents which help neutralize human odor, are used by many still-hunters, particularly bowhunters who must get extremely close to their quarry. There is some doubt as to just how necessary these are for the rifle hunter.

The still-hunter enters his chosen hunting ground carefully. He may take all day to hunt it—or several days if his time permits. It's stop-and-go hunting. Most likely he'll begin by standing quietly at the edge of an area, listening and looking. He may wet a finger, raise it above his head, and test the direction of the wind. Or he may simply study the area for awhile and map out a route for his hunt, realizing, of course, that his plans could change immediately if the developing hunt so dictates.

Eventually, the still-hunter will move on. Not hurriedly. Not noisily. He'll study the ground ahead and select a path over which he can travel as quietly as possible for a dozen yards or so. And when he moves he'll concentrate on the moving, keeping his eyes on the ground so as not to snap a twig beneath his feet. Or kick a loose stone, rustle loose leaves, or brush aside a branch to swish noisily in the still winter air. Make the move quietly. That's the important thing when moving. It gets his undivided attention. He may never take his eyes off the ground when he does so.

But then comes the pause, the brief rest. That's hunting time. Assuming the move has been done correctly. deer in the immediate area should be unalarmed, completely unaware of the still-hunter's presence. Now, for a few minutes he becomes a stand-hunter. looking, listening, every sense tuned into the world around him. This is the time that the game will most likely be sighted, that long awaited moment when good still-hunting produces a target the hunter can center his cross hairs on and slowly squeeze the trigger.

That pause between moves may last the direction of the wind. He works as long as half an hour. Much will directly into it if possible, but he will depend upon what the hunter sees and accept a crosswind. But a wind behind hears, his hunting instincts. If his him or one blowing from him toward chances of sighting game appear good, his quarry? Never. Such a breeze will he'll wait. Even longer than a half hour

on—exercising that same caution that governed his first move.

This move-wait-move-wait technique can go on all day, and cover maybe only a half mile, but it can be highly productive if done quietly, with patience, common sense, and good woodsmanship. It's hunting at its best.

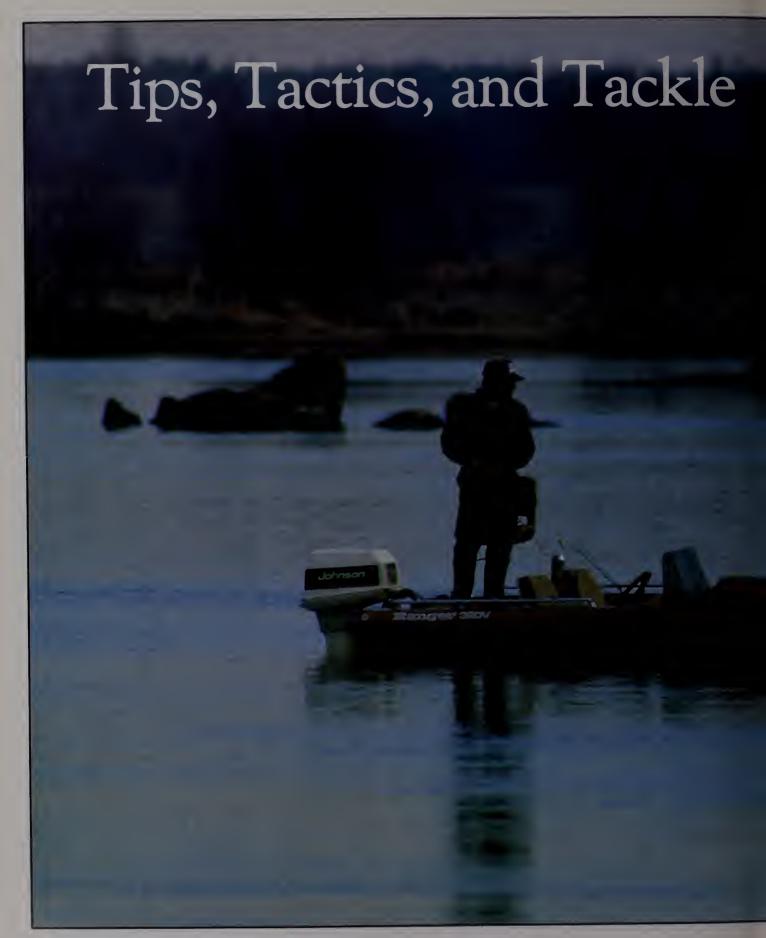
The moving hunter will rarely see a deer before the animal has detected him. Even with the wind in the hunter's favor, the deer has the advantage. It's his living room you are invading and he knows it well. It is during those pauses between moves that the hunter may enjoy some advantage. Then he may sight the deer first—or at least before it is alarmed. That's why the serious hunting should be limited to those pause between moves. For those few moments that still-hunter has the advantages the stand-hunter enjoys.

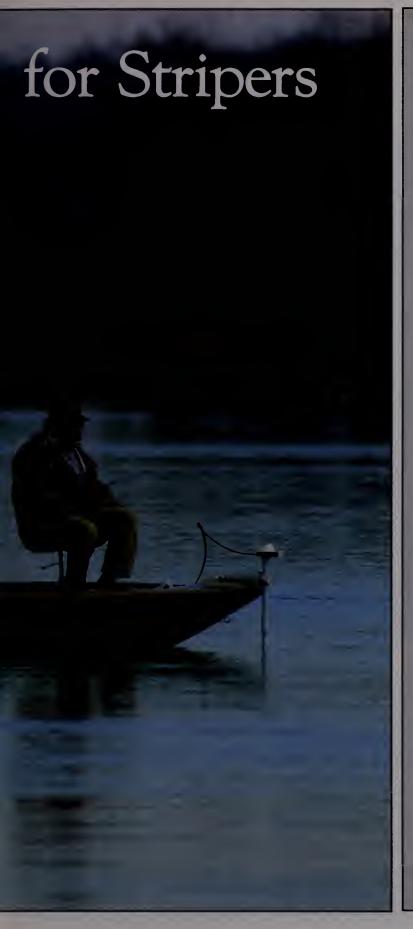
A carefully selected tree stand will probably produce more venison than still-hunting, but many hunters find it difficult to sit quietly for hours on end. Still-hunting gives them the break they seem to need, a time to stretch their muscles, or a chance to look at new surroundings. It's an interesting way to hunt, and a method that can be used regardless of how tiny the plot of hunting land might be. There is plenty of land in eastern Virginia, land now closed to hunting with hounds, that might well accommodate the cautious and courteous still-hunter.

Yes, still-hunting too enjoys a rich tradition. No, it's not a heritage brought to this country by our ancestors, but it's one that was already here when we arrived. The American Indian was a master at still-hunting. He had to be out of necessity. His primitive weapons dictated it. And those early Americans were good. Clad in softfinished buckskin and pussyfooting along in soft-soled moccasins, they could glide like shadows through those early American forests.

Sure, the modern deer hound enjoys a rich heritage, but the still hunt is an American tradition—and one to be proud of. \square

Bob Gooch is a well-known outdoor writer who has written several books on hunting and fishing, including the Virginia Hunting Guide and the Virginia Fishing Guide.





This is the season to fish for stripers in Virginia's lakes. Here's how.

by Bruce Ingram photos by Roy Edwards

t was not supposed to be an excursion for stripers that day on Leesville Lake several Novembers ago. The outing had been designed more as a "get acquainted" trip in order to learn more about this reservoir in the Roanoke and Lynchburg areas. But when my companion hooked into and landed a striper in the 15-pound range, all thoughts of catching bass, bluegills, and

walleyes quickly vanished.

Big stripers have a way of making one forget about the other fish. These residents of Virginia's reservoirs draw people from all over the country during the spring and summer seasons. The egg-filled females in the spring often top 25 pounds, and in the summer, tossing topwater lures at night is very popular. But the fall is the superlative time to visit our state's impoundments. Skip Nininger, a part-time guide on Smith Mountain Lake, says that the Old Dominion has a number of good autumn bets.

"Smith Mountain is far and away the best fall striped bass lake in the state, and I am not just saying that because I guide on it," states Nininger

who lives in Salem.

"The other lakes in the state are not nearly as good as Smith Mountain, but they still produce plenty of fish. Buggs Island is probably the second best right now for fall fishing, but you could also get a pretty good argument in favor of Gaston. Anna is another lake that is good in the fall. With the nuclear power plant that Anna has keeping the water so warm all summer, the fishing there really seems to pick up come fall."

Nininger, who has a 28-pound, 6ounce fall striper from Smith Mountain to his credit, says there are other reasons to journey to the Commonwealth's lakes at this season. Many people are concentrating on deer and other game animals this time of year, and thus the lakes receive much less fishing pressure.

Fishing the right areas in the fall is important. "In November and December, look for muddy or sandy points," says Nininger. "Try to get on the lake before daylight to get in on the morning feeding period. Bucktail jigs in the ½ ounce size range are good, as are the larger plugs such as the Cordell Red Fin. Fall is a great time for surface action, and a lure such as a Red Fin can produce plenty of strikes. When the fish go down a few feet, switch to a bucktail and bring it back with a steady retrieve. Jigs are really versatile because they can be worked just below the surface or any number of feet deep.

"I prefer to fish with lures, but I also know that often the fish become less active after 9:00 a.m. or so in the fall. That's when I'll tie on a shad. I'll keep shad in a variety of sizes on hand, ranging from the three to four-inch size up to the seven to eight-inch range. Use your graph to determine how deep to fish. Usually, the stripers will be down between 20 and 30 feet during the daylight hours, but sometimes they could be much deeper or shallower. A graph can also help you pinpoint the baitfish, and stripers will almost always be near the shad. Regardless of whether you are using lures or bait, when you hook into a fall striper, it's like hookother season."

species is basically an open water fish and does not relate to cover like a opt for 12-pound mono.

Fall and winter are the best times for striper fishing in the state. especially at Smith Mountain Lake and Claytor Lake.



Winter can also be a productive ing into a runaway truck. They fight time to seek out the Commonwealth's harder at this time of year than at any stripers. Because these fish are a coldwater species, they feed much better Despite the striper's legendary fight- this time of year, than, for example ing ability, heavy tackle is not a neces-largemouths or smallies do. John Jones, sity during autumn or at any other a guide from Vinton, has tips on where time of the year. This is because this to look for dead of winter linesides and how to entice them to strike.

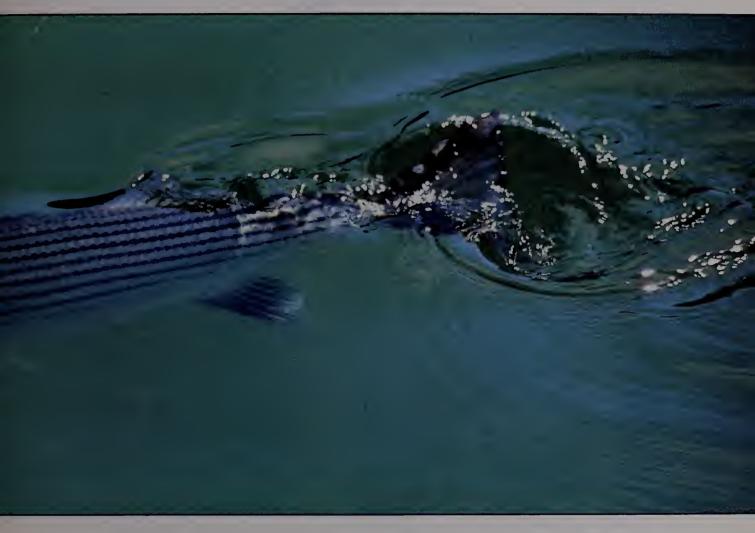
"In January and February, I have largemouth or smallmouth bass does. two places that I try to concentrate Thus, many sportsmen employ stand- on," he says. "One is small islands or ard spinning or baitcasting outfits that humps that are in the middle of the can be spooled with 14-pound-test lake. Some kind of cover, such as line. On clear water reservoirs such as standing trees, will often help this kind Smith Mountain, some fishermen even of spot. By January, the fish will be

deep until early March when they start to come into the creek channels.

"Stripers can also be found on long, sloping points, and they will be down at the same depths as they are on humps. If that point is on a main channel where it intersects with a secondary one, then you really have a dynamite situation. For deep water fishing, I prefer 34-ounce chrome Hopkins spoons, especially the Shorty model. I will drop the Hopkins to the bottom, then make 1½ turns of the reel handle, thus bringing the lure four to six feet off the bottom. Then I bring my rod tip up fast—about five feet—and tightdown 35 to 45 feet and will stay that line the spoon back down in a fluttering fashion until it hits something. And that something can be either the bottom or a big striper!"

Another artificial that Jones, who guides on Smith Mountain, relies on is a 34 to 1-ounce white bucktail jig. He don't do anything quickly."

and water has frozen there, it would be area both have fine populations of this very easy to fall in. And that's just one species. Claytor Lake near Pulaski also example of something flukey that could has been known to give up some good happen. Go slow about the boat, and fish during the fall and winter seasons. In fact, while fishing one bleak Decem-It is also important to take precauber day on Claytor, my companion



jig is descending. The Vinton resident Imagine whipping along in a boat when also has a warning concerning winter arrive back home. angling.

water," he states. "There are so many where fall and winter striper fishing little things that can go wrong. If you can be worth your time. Lakes Prince take a step along your boat gunwale and Western Branch in the Suffolk

will work the jig in the same manner tions with the weather. Dress warmly. and around the same areas as he does Snowmobile suits are favored by many the Hopkins. For both lures, strikes winter anglers, and these are often will usually occur while the spoon or donned over several layers of clothing. also uses a medium-heavy Quantum the air temperature is in the 20 degree graphite rod. Heavy action rods with a neighborhood, and it's easy to understiff backbone are required for winter stand why we must protect against angling, because you are bringing a lure hypothermia. It's also prudent to go up through such great depths, and set-fishing with a buddy and to inform ting the hook can be a problem. Jones someone of what time you plan to

The bodies of water mentioned so "Don't take any chances in cold far are by no means the only ones

jigged up two nice striped bass in the 10-pound range. Other likely spots include Carvins Cove, Lake Meade, and the Lone Star Lakes.

Striper fishing is more than just a spring and summer activity. These hardy fish come alive in the fall, and remain fairly active even during the bitter cold days of winter. And there's no doubt that the Old Dominion has more than its share of potential hot spots. Use the tips, tactics, and tackle outlined here and get ready to duel with this regular horse of a fish! □

Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for Outdoor Life magazine and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

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A·HUNTER'S·DUCKS

by Jerry Via



that most of your time is spent setting up and waiting. When the ducks fly, you better be ready. You don't have time to pull out your duck identification book when the ducks are setting into your decoys—no, the time to figure out if you've got mallards or teal coming in is before you pack your decoys and load your boat. Duck identification begins at home.

Unlike many birds, the timetable for ducks seems out of step, since they reach their peak breeding plumage in the dead of winter. Like most birds, though, the drakes are more colorful than the hens. Their colors are important for their courtship displays which attract females and help to ward off rival males. Females are typically colored in intricate shades of brown, since they have the duty of nest building, incubating the eggs and care of the young. After breeding, the males take on the more protective colors of the female in a plumage stage called the eclipse molt.

The wings of most ducks have a patch of color on the secondary feathers of the wing close to the body. This color patch, called the speculum, may be iridescent in color and difficult to see in dim light, or it may consist of bold patterns of white. The speculum is one of the most important features a duck has, because not only does it allow for the identification of different species, but also the identification of males and females.

On the following pages, we've tried to help you get a handle on some of the indentifying characteristics of five common ducks that you'll probably encounter in the field. But, don't stop there—pick up a good field guide and a pair of binoculars to make use of on those dull Sunday afternoons. It will make a better duck hunter out of you.—Virginia Shepherd and Jerry Via

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WOODDUCK



photo by Gregory Scott

ot only is the wood duck (Aix sponsa) one of the most beautiful birds in Virginia, it is also one of the most common breeding ducks in the state. The drake in breeding plumage is unmistakable, with its bright red eye and small red bill which accentuates the bold face pattern. One of the most characteristic features of both the male and female is the large rounded head with a slicked-back crest which give the head a characteristic shape. This crest, a tail which points upward and the high water profile of the wood duck give it a silhouette which is different from other waterfowl. Most of the beautiful colors of the drake are iridescent and only appear dark in low light. In flight, the wood duck drake is proportioned much like an American wigeon, but due to the crest and similar flight behavior, it is often confused with the hooded merganser. With practice the wood duck can be easily separated from these two species, because wood ducks lack the white wing patches of these species, and their wings are entirely dark except for a trailing edge of white.

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photo by Steve Maslowski

he male mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) is probably the best recognized duck in North America. The most distinctive feature is the emerald green head of the male which has earned it the name "greenhead." Males also have a white collar, a chestnut breast and the characteristic black curly "duck tail." In flight, both the male and female have an iridescent blue speculum with a white border at the front and rear of the speculum. These white borders as well as the white outer tail feathers and the light underwing linings are good field marks for flying mallard drakes. The wings of mallards are wide and in flight they appear to be set back farther on the body than most other ducks. Some of the distinctive features of the wild mallard, particularly the collar, may be missing on many individuals due to interbreeding with domestic strains of the mallard.

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photo by Larry Ditto

rom a distance, the black duck (Anas rubripes) really looks black, but a more careful inspection reveals that it is actually a dark brown duck with a lighter brown head and neck, and a greenish-yellow bill. Black ducks are slightly larger than mallards, but in flight the silhouettes are identical. Black ducks are easily indentified in flight because the pale silver wing linings contrasts dramatically with the uniform dark body. The speculum, which is a rich iridescent purple, is seen only at close range in good light. Sometimes, hybridization with the mallard may produce a black duck with a greenish head and white borders on the speculum or other misplaced mallard features.

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photo by Vinyard Brothers

ntil it takes flight, the blue-winged teal (Anas discors) through most of the year is one of the most difficult ducks to identify. It is one of the last of the ducks to attain breeding plumage in the fall, and most summer and early fall birds are small, dark-brown ducks. In this eclipse plumage they most resemble tiny black ducks. In flight they have a pale, sky-blue forewing and a dark green speculum, which along with their small size makes the blue-winged teal one of the most easily identified of all waterfowl. The blue wing patches persist all year in both sexes which allows easy separation from greenwinged teal and other waterfowl. The most diagnostic field mark of the breeding drakes is the slate-blue head with a white crescent in front of the eye. The wide white vertical stripe and the contrasting black rump are also excellent field marks.

HOODED MERGANSER



photo by Vinyard Brothers

he drake hooded merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) is a beautiful study in black and white. Unlike other North American waterfowl, the hooded merganser has a white, fan-like crest bordered in black, which is erected for courtship displays. Most of the time, however, the crest is folded in a swept-back position, giving the head a flattened appearance. In this position, the white in the crest is compacted into a white patch behind the eye, which at first glance often resembles a bufflehead, another small diving duck. The small thin bill and the dark sides of the drake hooded merganser are the most diagnostic features for separating these two species. To some, the silhouette is similar to the wood duck, but the narrow bill and white wing patches are diagnostic. In flight, the hooded merganser also exhibits rapid wing beats and often flies close to the surface of the water, unlike most "puddle ducks" which fly upward.

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your own little piece of inherited the year is a key to being in touch with

earth, but how do you go about doing it? You've been used to a house in suburbia with azaleas and rhododendrons and holly bushes framing your windows that please you alone—now, how do you go about pleasing the other inhabitants on your land?

Creating a natural harmony on your property begins with a plan that is based on an awareness of the wildlife potential of your land. Part of this whole process involves being in touch with your surroundings. This process begins in the morning. Wake up early before the dawn and sit outside your home as the sun begins to rise. Listen for the sounds of a new day and see what life is waking up around you. Hear the chirps of songbirds, and then see which birds are making their early

morning calls. Listen for the chatter of the Earth and the land that you live on, some type of ground cover, and open the squirrels, or alarm sounds of the chipmunk. Walk the woods or fields on your land and look for the signs of any nocturnal animals. Are there any tracks to be seen? Did a deer, raccoon, or opossum come through while it was

Follow the sun as the day progresses and map its path across the sky. Learn which parts of your land receive the most sunlight, and discover those areas that remain shaded throughout the

You have arrived. You now own three day. How will the land be affected as to five acres of land in the country, and the seasons progress during the year? you're ready to start living the Ameri- Monitor the local population of birds can Dream. You came out to the coun- as they pass through, noticing which try to "get away from it all," but you ones stay, and which ones keep on also came for the little piece of wilder- going. What animals are missing that ness in your backyard. Wildlife is very you would like to see? Why are they important to you, and you're now in a not there? Knowing the answers to position to live in harmony with it on these questions during each season of

On A Small Scale

So, you've moved out into the country to be landlord over your very own five acres. Here's how to make room for your wildlife tenants that also call it home.

by Randall Shank

Opposite: Cedar waxwing; photo by Gregory Scott.

and live with. The discovery of the life spots in the lawn should be reseeded. that is found all around you aids in the A cover crop of rye planted in the late development of a wildlife management summer or fall on the vegetable garden plan for your land.

pold, saw land as "not merely soil, but food source for rabbits and deer. a fountain of energy flowing through a

and it all begins with the soil.

Man's activities are constantly displacing, compacting, and polluting the soil. Goal number one in any wildlife habitat plan should be to keep the soil on the land. "Best Management Practices" are established techniques to keep the soil in place. Each situation is different, but there are several broad principles that can be locally adapted.

> Beginning with the buildings on the property, rain gutters, and downspouts should be attached to all roofs. Water runoff from the roof should be controlled with the use of drain tile and plant materials that protect the soil. Ditchbanks should be stablized. and gardens that are plowed should be planted on the con-

> A wide variety of plant materials can be used to stabilize soils. and many of them are of direct benefit to wildlife. Some important soil-holding plants that benefit birds and animals include lespedeza, clover, and honeysuckle. Vetch, fescue, and weeping lovegrass are also important soil holding species, but they are not as beneficial to wildlife. Any areas of bare ground should be planted with

area will not only help control erosion, Noted conservationist, Aldo Leo- but it will also serve as an important

Wildlife is an integral part of the soil circuit of soils, plants, and animals." erosion plan. The entire property The soil produces the vegetation that should be viewed as your wildlife feeds the insects that in turn feed the management area, and it should be birds. There is an interrelationship seen as a mini-ecosystem with imporbetween all living things on the land, tant interrelationships between species.





ment involves the manipulation of the money. habitat to benefit certain animals.

food and cover for wildlife. Autumn olive, Russian olive, shrub-lespedeza, ture and sunlight.

A basic premise of wildlife manage- higher, more seed can be bought for

Diversity in habitat will aid in the Adequate amounts of food, shelter increase of local wildlife populations. and water on your land are prerequi- A woodlot with red oaks, hickory. sites for maintaining a viable wildlife beech, and walnut are not only imporpopulation. The best way to supply tant roosting sites for birds, but their the food needs for wildlife is to grow it. nuts are vital parts of the diets of squir-There are many different kinds of rels, chipmunks, and deer. A small plant materials that can be grown for orchard with apple, cherry, and pear trees requires a minimum amount of care, provides food for man, and the viburnum and forsythia are important cull fruit will be savored by deer, oposshrubs for birds and animals. Plant sum, squirrels, and birds. The advanthese shrubs in hedgerows at least 15 tage to these fruits is that they can be feet from the woods, so that they do grown with a minimum use of pestinot compete with the trees for mois- cides. Natural meadows on your land will attract rabbits, field mice, meadow Near these shrub edges, food patches voles, moles, spiders, insects, and lots



Making room for wildlife on your land means providing the right food, water and shelter for them. Left: Important wildlife foods that double as good nesting cover are blackberries (above left, photo by Janet Shaffer), and autumn olive (bottom left, photo by Rob Simpson). Right: Adequate cover is especially important for small game species, such as the Eastern cottontail; photo by Jack R. Colbert.



of foxtail millet, grain sorghum, bobwhite soybeans, proso millet, and sunflowers can be planted in mixtures to serve as a food source for a large part of the year. Simply disk or rototill the soil in the spring, fertilize, and then broadcast the seed. A light disking will work the seed into the soil.

For birds, the perennial hedgerows and annual plantings can be supplemented in the winter by establishing feeding stations near adequate cover. Sunflower seed is probably preferred by more birds than any other kind. Blue jays, titimice, cardinals, chickadees, goldfinches, and other species

of birds that will feed on the bugs (see the May issue of Virginia Wildlife on how to establish a meadow).

Any food source must also be complemented with a adequate water source in the vicinity. Thus, water must be built into the overall plan. Something as simple as a bird bath or even a large bucket or tank of water near cover will attract doves, cardinals, blue jays, sparrows, and other species all year round. Even better, a spring or creek running through the property will be used by raccoons and other nocturnal visitors as a water resource.

Five acres of land is enough propare all attracted to sunflower seeds. erty to develop a small pond if the Proso millet is an important food water source, topography, and soil source for juncos, and sparrows. By conditions are suitable. A pond can purchasing seed in 25-pound lots or provide hours of enjoyment when

all call the pond home.

the needs of individual bird species.

Thickets made up of such plants as hawthorn, native blackberry, privet, crabapple, wild plum, wild grape, or autumn olive will serve as nesting areas for wildlife. Nesting cover for birds and animals can be artificially made by establishing brush piles at the far corners of the property. Rather than burn that excess brush from cleared areas, pile it and leave it. Songbirds will use it as protective cover in the winter, nesting cover in the summer, and rabbits will find it attractive all year round. When a tree dies on your land, do not automatically cut it down. Raccoons, squirrels, and birds will all nest in a hollow den tree. Large standing pines and hardwoods are important nesting sites for squirrels.

Once the landowner has established a plan for providing food, shelter, and water on his land in the country, he then needs to think about how his activities affect the fauna around him. In modern society, we have become very dependent on the use of pesticides to help manipulate our environment. For the average small landowner, more than anything else, the use of pesticides to eliminate unwanted pests has to do more with philosophy than with function. In order for your miniecosystem to remain balanced, unwanted insects and weeds should not be taken too seriously.

A dandelion in the yard, a caterpillar on a leaf, or a mole tunneling through the garden is not necessarily bad. We can live with weeds, bugs,

stocked with fish. Strategically place a mice and moles if we make that choice. nesting box near the pond for wood There are ways to combat nuisances ducks. Canada geese might even find that crop up from time to time in an the pond attractive. Muskrats, frogs, environmentally safe way. In the lizards, salamanders, and crawfish may vegetable garden, plant early in the season so that plants can get a jump on the Once food and water are established insects and the weeds. If the garden is on the acreage, shelter can then be growing well, the plants often cannot developed. Birdhouses of different be damaged to that threshold level by shapes and forms will attract all kinds invading insects. Cultivate the garden of birds. Bluebird houses should be and use a mulch rather than relying on located on fence rows, purple martin herbicides to control weeds. Encourhouses in the open, and wren nesting age beneficial insects like the praying boxes near heavier cover. Write to the mantis and the ladybird beetle to feed Game Department, c/o Education on plant destroying insects, and Mexi-Division, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, can bean beetles in snapbeans and VA 23230-1104 for plans on building soybeans. A blacksnake living in the various types of bird houses which suit garden will help keep the vole population in check. When insects do appear in high numbers, start by picking them off by hand, using traps, or if need be, by using natural insecticides.

> Maintain a proper fertility level in the soil by spreading animal manures as fertilizer and by keeping the pH at a neutral enough level to promote adequate growth of the plants. Healthy plants have a better chance of outcompeting pests. Balance of the entire system is a key to a healthy piece of land. It is only when the system is out of balance that certain species will

build up and become pests.

A place in the country can be a haven for people and for wildlife. The joys come when a grouse flushes from under the apple tree, when the bluebirds find the nesting box that you and your son built during the winter, or when a screech owl finds that back meadow a place to hunt for mice. It is when you hear the call of the whippoorwill at dusk, when you see a deer moving silently through the trees, or when you become startled at the flush of a covey of quail in the lespedeza that you know you are doing things right.

It is when there are no rabbits in the sweet potatoes or squirrels getting into the bird feeder, that we should begin to worry. By balancing our ecosystems on a small scale, we can begin to bring the much larger natural scheme back into harmony. For those of us with a small piece of land that we can call our own, it all begins at home. □

Randall Shank is an agricultural extension agent in King William County.



Above: Wild grapes provide a good food source and nesting cover for wildlife; photo by Rob Simpson. Below: Eastern bluebirds utilize cavities for nesting, as do other birds and mammals. Don't automatically cut down dead trees on your property; leave them as denning sites for wildlife; photo by Jack Colbert.



by Nancy Hugo



call 'em hitchhikers."
"I call 'em beggar lice."
"I call 'em sticktights."
"I call 'em a pain."

Whatever you call them, seeds that travel by sticking on our clothes or the fur of animals are as familiar as frost in the fall.

"They jump on you," one friend complained, as she was pulling hitch-hikers off her socks. They don't, of course, but if hitchhikers seem more animate than the seeds of other plants, maybe it's because we see them accomplishing what plants are usually hard-pressed to do—they're moving.

There are dozens of ways seeds have developed to put distance between themselves and their parents to improve their chances of survival. Dandelion seeds ride on the wind; jewelweed seeds catapult from their pods like projectiles; red cedar seeds move through the digestive systems of animals; coconuts float. But few of these modes of transportation are we as intimately—and sometimes painfully—aware of as we are with the travels of hitchhikers.

We have dozens of common names for them—beggar lice, beggar ticks, stickseeds, sticktights, and tag-alongs to mention a few, and it's nearly impossible to get two people to agree which name belongs to which seed. Latin names would help, but what woodsman is going to complain about the Desmodium on his jacket? This is a guide to hitchhikers and the plants they come from. It may not resolve any disputes over names ("They'll always be beggar lice to me"), but it will answer the question asked by every hiker who's ever come home with hitchhikers on his socks: "Where did they come from?"

Tick Trefoils

These are the triangular hitchhikers

that stick to your clothes like velcro. The segmented pods often have several triangular parts that may stay strung together like a chain or break apart into one-seeded segments. There are dozens of species of tick trefoils whose flowers and fruits differ slightly, but they all belong to the genus Desmodium—from the Greek desmos for chain. Their common names include beggar ticks, sticktights, tick trefoil, beggar lice, and tick clover.

Under a microscope you can see the

vary from deep pink to purple to white (like perennial sweet peas), and they bloom from July to August.

Bidens

Some species of *Bidens* are also called beggar ticks. Others are called bur marigolds, tickseed sunflowers, Spanish needles, and shepherd's needles. The fruit of most species is flat and wider at one end than the other with two prongs at the wider end (the word *Bidens* means two-pronged). Spanish needles (*B. bipinnata*), how-

Hitchhikers are known for their sticking ability—to just about anything that moves. But did you ever wonder where they came from?

tangle of tiny hooked hairs that make the seed pods so adhesive, and if you open up a pod you'll find a tiny smooth seed inside like a lima bean. Since the plant is a legume, the seeds are highly nutritious and full of protein. They're a readily available source of food for bobwhite quail, and they're sometimes used by turkeys and other ground nesting birds.

The parent plant is actually very pretty—dainty, in fact—and you might never expect it to have such pesky offspring. Although it can grow as tall as six feet, the plant is usually spindly and inconspicuous. Its leaves are made up of three smooth-edged leaflets, and its flowers are pea-like, about ½-inch long and borne in loose clusters. They

ever, have more slender fruit than the other species, and their fruits, which look like marigold seeds, have three or four sharp prongs.

If you've wondered just how those little prongs could adhere so well, look at a *Bidens* fruit under a microscope. A magnified view shows the prongs themselves are covered with barbs and they're as effective as fish hooks in staying put once hooked. Clusters of them cling to the spent *Bidens* flower heads and they brush off easily onto clothes or the coats of animals.

The parent plants have yellow, orange, or greenish flowers, which, depending on the species, are either showy or inconspicuous. One of the showiest of the *Bidens* in Virginia is the

Tight

photos by Robert C. Simpson



tickseed sunflower (B. polyepis), which has yellow daisy-like flowers that light up our roadside ditches in September and October. Its prongs are short, so its fruit is less troublesome to outdoorsmen than that of other species. Spanish needles, which are also common in Virginia, have a square stem, fernlike leaves, and inconspicuous yellow or greenish yellow flowers that look like they have no petals. Their fruits are troublesome, and they're arranged on the 1-5 foot plant in a starlike arrangement that presents as many possibilities of grabbing you as possible.

Henry David Thoreau complained about the *Bidens* fruit and tick trefoils this way:

"Though you were running for your life, they would have time to catch and cling to your clothes . . . These almost invisible nets, as it were, are spread for us, and whole coveys of desmodium and bidens seeds steal transportation out of us. I have found myself often covered, as it were, with an imbricated coat of the brown desmodium seeds or a bristling chevaux-de-frise of beggar ticks, and had to spend a quarter of an hour or more picking them off in some convenient spot; and so they get just what they wanted—deposited in another place."

In case you, too, want to complain about a "chevaux-de-frise of beggar ticks," know that the French phrase once referred to the iron spikes on a piece of timber used to repel calvary and has come to mean the iron spikes on a security fence. A pretty formidable presence.

There's a silver lining in all this, though, because wood ducks, gamebirds, and songbirds like the purple finch use *Bidens* fruit to a limited extent for food. That eases the frustra-

tion.

Burdock

I continually underestimate burdock burs. They just don't look that adhesive, and they're surprisingly soft for burs. But don't let that pliable exterior fool you. Burdock burs are as tenacious as pit bulls. They'll even selfdestruct before letting go.

Each round burdock bur is about 34-inch wide and covered with tiny hooks. It's easy to see the hooks with the naked eve, but they're more impressive under a microscope. I've read that the hooks of the burdock bur inspired the inventor of a mechanical fastener, and although, I don't know

genus is Arctium.

The burdock plant is coarse and easy to spot. The most common species, Arctium minus, can be as tall as five feet and has widely spreading branches. In mid-summer it has clusters of pinkish-purple, thistle-like blooms that appear at the end of stems or in the leaf axils. It is below these flowers that the burs form, with the flower bracts becoming the hooked barbs.

Young leaves and flower stalks of burdock are edible, and the early settlers taught the Indians to use them, since burdock is a European import.

burdock, and the Latin name of the in the way it looked. For example, they used curled dock to treat jaundice because it had yellow roots; they used saxifrage to treat kidney stones because its roots forced their way into crevices in rocky cliffs. Since burdock burs had such adhesive hooks, the herbalists reasoned it would be a powerful aid to memory—making things stick in the mind. Unfortunately, the recipe for this potion seems to have been forgotten.



The cocklebur, or clotbur, is the bur I like least to tangle with. Burdock burs are annoying, but cockleburs can hurt. The cocklebur is an oval bur about ½ to 34 inches long. It has hooked prickles like burdock burs, but they're stiffer and more open in their arrangement than the hooks on burdock burs. What will really get you on a cocklebur, however, are the two long horned appendages at the end of the bur. Not all species have them, but those that do are vicious, because the horns are needle sharp.

Cockleburs belong to the genus Xanthium, and like burdock, they inhabit fields, roadsides, and waste places. Cocklebur plants are 1 to 6-feet tall with coarse stems, leaves shaped like maple leaves, and separate male and female flowers that bloom from August to October. It's the female flowers, found in the leaf axils where the upper leaves join the stem, that become the burs. When they bloom, they are almost completely enclosed in green bracts that will become the bur's spines. The male flowers, also greenish, are clustered in heads at the ends of the branches.

Cockleburs are as tough as whitleather, and if you want to prove it, try prying one open with your fingernail. If you succeed (a pocket knife may work if your fingernails don't), you'll find two long black seeds inside the bur. One, I'm told, is more dormant than the other, which improves the plants chances of survival since if one doesn't germinate or survive the first season, the other can germinate the

If you've never seen a cocklebur,



it's the hook-and-eye he invented, it's Deer and rabbits sometimes nip the was also inspired by a bur.

when pulled. They also love to stick to each other, and two burdock branches dock seeds to improve skin diseases. rubbed against each other will result in a bundle of burs as big as a softball.

hurr burr are all common names for they believed a plant's use was revealed

the hook-and-eye I think of every time tender young shoots. The plant has I see burdock. The inventor of velcro also been used medicinally for centuries. In the Middle Ages it was used to I remember carrying a burdock bur treat leprosy, and later herbalists used with me to a talk once, demonstrating it to treat everything from scurvy to how it clung to my sleeve, and then boils, indigestion, rheumatism, hystebeing unable to get it loose. They're ria, and "the biting of any serpents." particularly problematic in dog and cat Contemporary herbalists still recomfur, because they often break apart mend a poultice of burdock leaves to reduce swellings and a tincture of bur-

My favorite use for burdock, however comes from the herbalists who Beggars's buttons, beggars lice, and ascribed to the doctrine of signatures:

tromp around the edges of a soybean field, and a cocklebur will find you.

Bedstraw

With bedstraw, it's not just the fruit that clings. Walk through a patch of bedstraw and you're likely to find the whole plant clinging to your pant's leg. Bedstraw is a sprawling, prickly plant that reclines along the ground almost like a vine. It has whorled leaves around square stems and clusters of little 3-5 petaled flowers that bloom in late spring and summer. It's the tiny bristles on the stems, leaves, and little round fruit of bedstraw that make them cling to clothes and fur.

Not all species of bedstraw cling, but those that do have gathered common names like catchweed, cleavers, and scratchgrass. One species is also called goosegrass because geese eat the plants. The botanical name of the genus is Galium, and the species name for one common species, Galium aparine, comes from the Greek aparo, to seize. The flowers of Galium aparine are white, but some bedstraw have yellow, greenish, or even maroon flowers.

Bedstraw has had dozens of uses through the ages. The stems of a sweet smelling yellow-flowering species were used to stuff mattresses, and legend has it that Jesus was born on a bed of bedstraw. The bristly stems were also once used to strain milk, and they are eaten as a spring vegetable credited with straining yucky stuff from the system: "fitting the Body for the season that follows, by purging away those excrementitious dregs which the winter has bred in them." Lacemakers added the stickly little round seeds of bedstraw to the heads of pins to prevent the pins from slipping through net or lace.

Two more contemporary uses of bedstraw suggest that if you have bedstraw clinging to your leg, you may not Lesser Hitchhikers need coffee or deodorant in you backpack. Some natural food enthusiasts make Cleavers or Goosegrass Seed Coffee by roasting the bedstraw seeds then brewing them as you would coffee. A Cleavers deodorant that is riverbanks and beaches, most of us reputedly effective can be concocted this way: simmer a large handful of genus Cenchrus) less frequently than

Yellow Bedstraw (Galium vernum)

saucepan of one quart of water, strain, and apply to armpit with wool cotton.

Bedstraw seeds are also a food source for wildlife—especially quail. According to wildlife biologist Johnny Redd, when snow is on the ground, quail will jump against the plant to shatter the seeds on the snow. Then they consume the seeds on top of the snow.

A sandspur is a lesser hitchhiker? My son, who's been trying to get the remnants of a sandspur out of his foot for a month, would dispute that. But because their range is limited to sandy encounter sandspurs (members of the cleavers (stalks and leaves) in a covered other hitchhikers. They are among the

most painful of burs not only because their irregular spikes are so sharp, but because when we encounter them it's usually our bare flesh and not our clothes they're riding on.

Other fruits that travel by hitchhiking include the Hounds tongue's (Cynoglossums) which remind me of tiny sea urchins, Virginia stickseed (Hackelia virginiana), a prickly 1/8-inch bur, and European stickseed (Lappula echinata) a tiny bur with spines along its perimeter.

There's also a plastic bag sitting on my desk that contains a hitchhiker that's new to me, but it's evidently familiar to many hunters. The friend who gave it to me calls it a petticoat creeper because it will creep up your petticoat if it touches the hem of your skirt. I've been unable to get mine to be so fresh, but a hunter friend tells me he's had them attach to his pant's leg and before he knows it they're into his underwear. The delicate blond twig with grass-like seeds in my bag looks downright innocent, but I'm told it's the dastardly Panicum capillare, or witchgrass.

A good word for hitchhikers

I know they're a pain. Nothing clings tighter than a hitchhiker when you want to look respectable in a hurry. But although some people seem to think they're as disgusting as dandruff, I must confess I've sometimes left them on my jacket the way a skier does his lift ticket. "She's been in the field today," I guess they're supposed

I also like them because they remind me of something bigger. They remind me that whatever I may think my important purposes are for geting where I'm going, my travels may have functions I never imagined. I doubt anyone ever put "Get bidens from one side of the field to the other" on his list of things to do today, but many a hiker has accomplished it. I like being reminded of purposes beyond me and of mysteries clinging to my pant's leg. And I like knowing that wherever I think I'm going, a hitchhiker thinks I'm going the right way. \Box

Nancy Hugo is a freelance outdoor writer who lives in Ashland.

Family Outdoors

Spike Knuth

Signs in the Wild

Almost everyone, it seems, enjoys a hike in the woods or fields. For some. however, that's about all it is—a hike or a walk. There's an old Chinese proverb that says, "Eyes that look are common, eyes that see are rare." Most people seldom see wildlife that is right

under their noses.

One way you can see more wildlife is to learn to see some of the signs in the wild that will tell you what creatures are around. Learning to identify some of these signs will help you enjoy the outdoors a little more. Even if you don't actually see the bird or mammal, you'll know they are around because you've seen their signs—their trademarks—which will give you a sense of satisfaction.

For example, the woodcock is a shy. retiring bird that prefers the secrecy of a quiet, moist thicket or bottomland around small creeks. At night it will come out to feed on earthworms. Because of its nocturnal habits, it is seldom seen, but one way you can know that the woodcock has been around is to find its whitewash-like droppings on the leaves or the little in a pine or aspen tree? They look as if drill holes made in the mud where it someone has carefully hammered them was feeding.

downed tree branches.

small tree or group of saplings that are intervals for several days. They may



photo by Cindie Brunner

all scraped or scarred up, and stripped of bark. This is a buck rub that a male deer has made to help scrape velvet from its antlers and to practice for combat with other bucks. By sparring with the small trees, the deer engages in a sort of shadow boxing. For the most part, this action is harmless, unless the deer gets into a tree nursery.

Have you ever seen a series of holes in there in a certain pattern. Some will A fairly obvious sign of beavers are run parallel, up or down the trunk, the cuttings left near a swamp, creek, while others will go around the trunk river, pond, or lake. The trees show for a bit, and then up or down in the gnawing marks that form an hour-variable patterns. Oftentimes, sap will glass shape if it's still intact, or a cone- be oozing from them, or dried sap will shaped stump. Looking closely, you be noticable. They were put there by can actually see the tooth marks from the yellow-bellied sapsucker, a member their long chisel-like incisor teeth. You of the woodpecker family. It will tap will probably be able to detect the path its feeding holes to get at the sap which or "run" from which a beaver came it sweeps up with its tongue. It may out of the water and returned with also feed on the insects that get stuck in the sap. If it finds a particularly pro-In the fall, you may come upon a ductive tree, it will return at regular

even have a regular route for tapped trees that they visit in the spring. Apparently, it has no individual favorites in the way of trees. A sapsucker's drill holes can be found in pine, plum. apple, pear, maple and aspen, occasionally in cherry, and pecan, and probably in others.

When you are near a pond or creek, and see a little mound of mud that looks like it was made of little mud balls and there's a hole in the center, you've found the home of the crayfish or crawdad. Like its saltwater cousins, the crabs, it digs little dens in the moist

mud near creeks or ponds.

Footprints are excellent ways of determining what kinds of wildlife have been around, and what they are doing. Raccoon tracks are fairly easy to recognize. They look like a tiny barefooted man who has been walking around in the mud. Look for them on muddy creek banks or lake shores. Raccoons are nocturnal feeders, too, and the crayfish are one of their favorite foods. You'll frequently see the raccoon's droppings on a big log. Trappers will tell you that raccoons can't resist walking along big logs, which is where they will set their traps to catch them.

Other prints you might find in the mud of a marsh might belong to a heron or egret. In the tidal marshes these tracks were probably made during low tide when the birds came to

feed on small crabs and fish.

These are just a few simple, obvious signs in the wild, fairly easy to recognize. Even though we may not be experienced woodsmen, we can gain some satisfaction by being perceptive and recognizing some of the signs that our wildlife leave. It's the first step to seeing.

Safety

Sleeping Out

It was a dark night. A boat operator and his family had decided to spend the night on the water. The weather forecast predicted calm seas and light winds, so they had packed some provisions and gone out on a local river. They found a spot out of the main channel, lowered the anchor with plenty of scope and made sure that the anchor light was fixed high enough so that its beam could be seen from all points of the compass.

The family was about to settle down for the night when the sound of an approaching powerboat was heard. The drone of the engine gradually became louder, so one member decided to look for the boat lights. There were

none to be seen.

The engine of the oncoming vessel could be heard very clearly. As the sound increased in volume it became obvious to all hands that there was a possibility of collision if their anchor light had not been observed. Action was immediate. Flashlight beams were directed toward the engine noise. Whistles and horns were sounded. Shouts added to the din. The response was rapid; there was a change in engine throb as the unseen vessel slowed. then altered course.

Incidents such as these are relatively rare, but they are part of the weird happenings which can occur on the water during the hours of darkness. Dragging anchor is another disconcerting event of the night. One or more anchors may be set and tested for holding, but during the night, with wind and tide changes, an anchor may let go. If two anchors are placed and plenty of scope is used, chances of drifting are greatly reduced. If the anchor line is too short or the bottom is too smooth and hard, anchors can slip and the boater may wake up the next morning

to find his boat hard aground or, at best, a long distance from the bedtime location. A vessel may drift into a busy channel, toward a falls or into a congested mooring or docking area where Hunter Education much damage could result.

In these days of high crime rates, the danger of unwelcome visitors during the night is a possibility. It is improbable that little wavelets slapping against the boat hull would disturb a boater. but the sound of footsteps on the deck, in the dead of night, could cause consternation. It is at such times that a person thinks of a need for defensive weapons. But, by that time, it is a bit late if defensive plans have not been made. Many boaters would welcome an alarm to warn of danger. An alarm which sounds when interlopers step onto the deck is too late: but there is one which will warn of intruders while they are still far enough away for defensive action to be taken. The one which will do that is a radar alarm.

With a radar alarm, a guard zone can be set around a boat. If any object penetrates that screen, an alarm sounds. To be certain that it is heard, extensions can be placed in various spots in a vessel so that the warning is audible to sleeping persons. The radar zone of protection can be adjusted to respond when any object is detected within a specific distance or in any sector around a vessel.

When an intruder is detected at a reasonable distance from a boat, appropriate action can be taken to determine whether the suspect is a deliberate intruder or just a boater that wandered into the guard zone. Spotlights can be directed toward the suspect and a warning can be issued. The radar alarm can promote a situation favorable to the defense of a vessel.— William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Classes

All first-time Virginia hunters and those between 12 and 15 years of age must complete a mandatory 10-hour hunter safety course. These courses are given free of charge throughout the state and are sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Since these courses are conducted by volunteer instructors, they are often coordinated as the need comes up. Therefore, if you are interested in signing up for one of these courses, contact your local game warden for a schedule of courses going on in your area, or call the Richmond office of the Game Department at 804/367-1000. □

Don't Forget Your Blaze Orange!

During the firearms deer season that starts on November 21 in most areas of the state, don't forget to don your blaze orange when you take to the woods. Every hunter, and every person accompanying a hunter during this season must be wearing a blaze orange hat or blaze orange upper body clothing that is visible from 360 degrees or display at least 100 square inches of solid blaze orange material at shoulder level within body reach and that is visible from 360 degrees. Those not required to wear blaze orange during this season are: waterfowl hunters, those participating in dog field trials, and fox hunters on horseback without firearms.

Habitat

Nancy Hugo

Virginia Creeper

To appreciate the esteem in which Virginia creeper was once held, consider this: it lost out to the dogwood as our state floral emblem by only one vote. It was in 1918 that the Virginia General Assembly debated the relative merits of the dogwood and Virginia creeper, and the story goes that Virginia creeper lost out only because one legislator successfully argued that Virginians weren't climbers—meaning social climbers, I guess.

But climbing is no vice when you're offering food and shelter to wildlife. Like wild grapes, honeysuckle, ivy and other climbing vines, Virginia creeper offers not only cover, but nesting sites for birds. Its blue-black berries are a food source for over 37 species, and some of our most popular song birds are among it principal users. Mockingbirds, robins, bluebirds, brown thrashers, and thrushes all love the grape-like berries of Virginia creeper.

There are two reasons why Virginia creeper (also called woodbine and false grape) gets less respect than it deserves in its namesake state. The first is because it's so familiar, we think of it as a weed. It does grow wild, and it's as common as dandelions (well, maybe not that common), but to appreciate its beauty we need only see the way it's used in Europe where it's widely cultivated as an ornamental. In Venice, it's used to cover both crumbling walls and carefully prepared trellises; in Virginia it's lucky to be allowed a foothold on a barn wall.

The second strike against it is its resemblance to poison ivy. Because both Virginia creeper and poison ivy have beautiful scarlet fall foliage and they often grow together, they are often confused. "Three leaves spell foe, five leaves spell friend" is the expression used to teach the difference between the two. It sounds simple



Virginia creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia); photo by Rob Simpson.

enough, and usually is, because unlike poison ivy which has three leaflets, Virginia creeper has five 2-6 inch leaflets arranged like fingers around the palm of the hand. But, as if determined to keep the issue confused, some new Virginia creeper foliage emerges as three shiny green leaves that look for all the world like poison ivy.

Don't let that stop you from planting it or from letting it grow where it comes up. Virginia creeper can look as beautiful on a garden trellis as it does in the tops of roadside trees. It will grow on walls, fences, arbors, and tree trunks. To cultivate Virginia creeper in the garden, move plants where you want them in the spring or fall and set them 3-4 inches apart near the surface on which you want them to climb. One of the most beautiful supports for Virginia creeper is an evergreen tree which provides the perfect backdrop for the brilliant fall foliage.

Virginia creeper will grow in either sun or part shade and tolerates most soils, although it prefers deep, rich, moist loam. It grows both high and fast, and it will need pruning to keep it under control. One garden writer warns, "It has to be clawed away from windows if the inhabitants are not to become troglodytic (like cave dwellers) in a couple of years." That may be an overstatement, but it's good to remember how vigorously it will grow if it's in a spot it likes.

And, it's as good as its name. Its method of climbing is to send out tendrils tipped with adhesive discs that cement themselves to the growing surface. Darwin reportedly tested their strength and found that five of these discs grouped together on a single tendril could support a weight of 10 pounds. What a featherweight a bird's nest must seem in comparison!

Letters

Trout Fishing

sons for a low trout catch on opening streams due to secret stockings. day was factual, but I'd like to address a deeper issue which I think the writer to cure his opening day blues, I'd sug-

he has made donations to the wildlife fund and purchased fishing licenses and that he believes his expenditures kids-fishing only opening day waters. have been "for nothing." To me, this The quality of opening day trout fishletter is representative of a growing ing will return only after anglers regain mercenary, "me, first" attitude, where- sight of the real values afforded by this in the value of stocked trout fishing traditional spring event. rests primarily with the amount of fish creeled for food.

It is unfortunate that some believe the purchase of a license equates to the purchase of fish. Indeed, a license is merely a permit to use our resource. It is also unfortunate that the writer, like many opening day fishermen, could not see the value in a recreational outing with friends and family—fish or no fish. I wish that I could once again share opening day with relatives who have passed on. It's a shame the author of that letter doesn't realize how lucky he is to be able to go fishing with his

I also take issue with the writer's comment that it's "a sad ending to an enjoyable sport." Yes there are problems with the stocking program (as there are in every state that has one), but these problems originate primarily with the lust of many stocked trout fishermen to creel as many trout as possible with little concern for sport, not with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' concept of streams, the incredible number of cit-volunteer their time.

I am writing to respond to a letter ation brown trout caught last year, the "Trout Fishing Blues" in the June issue growth of angler clubs like Trout of Virginia Wildlife. I think biologist Unlimited and the increase in the Mohn's answer to the technical rea- number of resident trout in stocked

If the writer of that letter truly wants gest he fish on one of the special regu-Specifically, the writer indicates that lation streams, fish one of the national park or forest streams that harbor wild trout or take a child to one of the

> Daniel M. Downey, Ph.D. Harrisonburg

Insulted

I am not antihunting, but the arrogance displayed in the Editor's Note and the article defending sportspeople in the September issue have prompted me to drop my subscription to your magazine.

As one who has seen many a sunrise in the out-of-doors, tracked wildlife in wet and cold conditions for the indescribable pleasure of observing it, and spent many an hour pouring over writings on nature, I resent the implication that these experiences are reserved for hunters. I am insulted by the editor's insinuation that nonhunters spend their time in shopping malls and other such places and are unable, poor dears, to understand such things.

I also resent the implication that nonhunters do not make substantial contributions to wildlife protection. Many nonhunters contribute finanthe program. Indeed, the sport of trout cially to habitat preservation efforts. fishing in the Old Dominion is not More importantly, many forego large dying, but is alive and growing. As salaries to work for public interest evidence of this, take note of the grow- organizations that protect habitat from ing number of special regulation development and pollution. Others

To maintain a broad subscription base that includes nonhunters as well as hunters, I suggest that you refrain from insulting nonhunters in future issues. You should also increase the number of articles on nongame species. Currently, the magazine gives disproportionate attention to hunting and fishing issues and species.

> Carol Dansereau Falls Church

Virginia Open Team Pheasant Championship

On November 4, 5, and 6, the Virginia Open Team Pheasant Championship will be held at Oakland Farm Shooting Preserve in Orange, VA. A limit of 40 teams, each consisting of two hunters and one hunting dog will compete in a timed hunt that is designed to test the shooting skill of the hunters, and the teamwork between the hunter and his dog. The rules are geared to reward good wingshots, sportsmanship and the effective bird finding and retrieving skills of hunting dogs. Call Dave Pomfret at 703/854-4540 for more details. Entries and spectators are welcome!

Virginia Birdline— Dial 703/898-3713

The Virginia Society of Ornithology has established Virginia's first rare bird hotline, a tape recorded message that is updated weekly to keep birders up-to-date on rare birds sighted in Virginia. This hotline is also available for those reporting rare bird sightings in the state, and information from the public is welcomed. Dial 703/898-3713 for latest information on birds winging through our state!

Field Trials Scheduled

Below is a schedule of the pointing dog field trials scheduled at the Game Department's wildlife management areas. All these events are free to the public and are great fun for spectators. The whole family is welcome at these events. Most of the clubs have special rules regarding the entering of dogs in their events, so it is best to contact the club directly if you are interested in participating. Otherwise, just show up at the wildlife management area on the day of the trial, and see what a pointing dog was bred to do!

Elm Hill Wildlife Management Area November 5-6

Tidewater Field Trial Club November 11-13

Tarheel Brittany Club

November 16-20

Virginia Bird Hunters Association November 26-27

Virginia Amateur Field Trial Assoc. December 3-4

Southern Virginia Field Trial Club December 10-18

Virginia Bird Hunters Association

Amelia Wildlife Management Area November 5-6

Peninsula Bird Hunters Club November 12-13

Central Virginia Bird Hunters Club November 19-20

Cockade Field Trial Club

C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area

November 5-6

Northern Virginia Field Trial Club

Buggs Island Surprise

Some fish have a way of showing up in the most unexpected places, which is exactly what a 16-pound freshwater drum did this past August. Mike Barfield of Chase City was fishing in a bass club tournament on Buggs Island when he hooked the fish. "My buddy and I were fishing this rock pile with little success when I decided to take one



Buy A Stamp—For The Ducks

The "First of State" Virginia Waterfowl Stamp is now on sale for \$5.00 where you buy your hunting license. Waterfowl throughout the country is in trouble, and proceeds from this voluntary hunting stamp will be used to purchase much needed waterfowl habitat for migrating birds, for improvement to existing waterfowl habitat in Virginia, and to fund waterfowl research projects. Support your Game Department's waterfowl management program by purchasing this annual stamp, whether or not you hunt waterfowl.

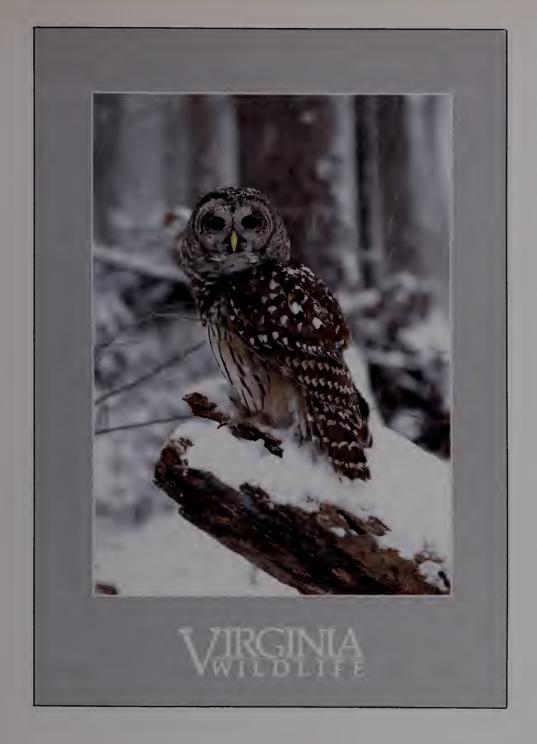
more cast before we left," says Barfield. "I felt it hit and knew it was

something big!"

This silvery cousin of the more familiar coastal species (spot and croaker) is native to most of the Great Lakes, tributaries to the Mississippi River, the St. Lawrence River, and a few other Canadian drainages. Michael Duval, District Fisheries Biologist with the Department, is puzzled by the presence of a freshwater drum in the Roanoke River, but speculates the fish hitched a ride with a shipment of Midwest fish received by the Brookneal Hatchery and was unwittingly released into the Staunton River more than five years ago!

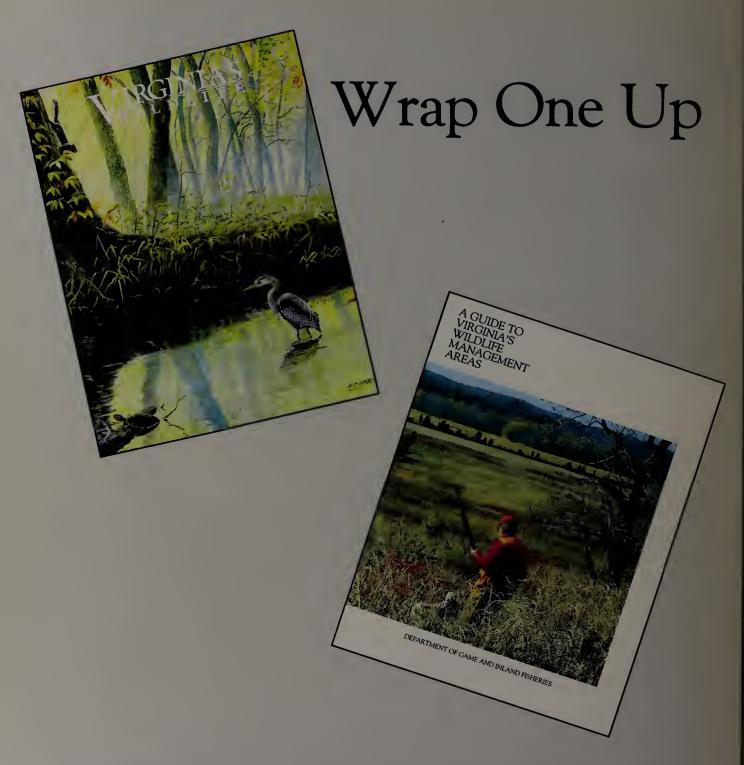
Special Price for Sportsman's Calendars

The popular Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Sportsman's Calendar, running from September 1988 through August 1989 has been discounted to \$3.00 each for the 8½ x 11-inch size. Simply write your check for \$3 each (this includes all postage and handling) to the Treasurer of Virginia, and send it to: Sportsman's Calendar, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Please allow four weeks for delivery.



Send a Snow-covered Gift

Give Virginia Wildlife's 19½" x 27½" full color poster of a barred owl for Christmas. Send your check made out to the Treasurer of Virginia for \$7.00 (which includes postage and mailing) to: Owl Poster Offer, Virginia Wildlife, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send your check now, so that we can get your poster to you by Christmas!



and put it under your own Christmas tree—when you buy 10 or more subscriptions to *Virginia Wildlife* for your friends at the unbeatable, unbelievable low price of 4 bucks a year. To top it all off, you and your friends will receive the quarterly newspaper, *Virginia Sportsman* free. How's that for some Christmas cheer?

(Use the order form in the magazine, and do it now, because the offer expires January 1, 1989.)